



# Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks

*Region Three*  
*1400 South 19<sup>th</sup> Avenue*  
*Bozeman, MT 59718*

May 10, 2017

To: Governor's Office, Tim Baker, State Capitol, Room 204, P.O. Box 200801, Helena, MT 59620-0801  
Environmental Quality Council, State Capitol, Room 106, P.O. Box 201704, Helena, MT 59620-1704  
Dept. of Environmental Quality, Metcalf Building, P.O. Box 200901, Helena, MT 59620-0901  
Dept. of Natural Resources & Conservation, P.O. Box 201601, Helena, MT 59620-1601  
Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks:

Director's Office	Parks Division	Lands Section	FWP Commissioners
Fisheries Division	Legal Unit	Wildlife Division	Design & Construction

MT Historical Society, State Historic Preservation Office, P.O. Box 201202, Helena, MT 59620-1202  
MT State Parks Association, P.O. Box 699, Billings, MT 59103  
MT State Library, 1515 E. Sixth Ave., P.O. Box 201800, Helena, MT 59620  
James Jensen, Montana Environmental Information Center, P.O. Box 1184, Helena, MT 59624  
Janet Ellis, Montana Audubon Council, P.O. Box 595, Helena, MT 59624  
George Ochenski, P.O. Box 689, Helena, MT 59624  
Jerry DiMarco, P.O. Box 1571, Bozeman, MT 59771  
Montana Wildlife Federation, P.O. Box 1175, Helena, MT 59624  
Wayne Hurst, P.O. Box 728, Libby, MT 59923  
Jack Jones, 3014 Irene St., Butte, MT 59701  
Jack Atcheson, 2309 Hancock Avenue, Butte MT 59701  
U.S. Army Corp of Engineers, Helena  
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Helena  
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, 420 Barrett Street, Dillon, MT 59725  
Big Hole Watershed Committee, P.O. Box 931, Butte, MT 59703  
Montana Trout Unlimited, P.O. Box 7186, Missoula, MT 59807  
Dan Vermillion, FWP Commissioner, Livingston MT  
Earnest and Colleen Bacon, 2215 Fishtrap Creek Road, Wisdom, MT 59761  
Dept. of Natural Resources and Conservation, 730 N. Montana Street, Dillon, MT 59725-9424  
George Grant Chapter of Trout Unlimited, P.O. Box 563, Butte, MT 59703  
Skyline Sportsmen, P.O. Box 173, Butte, MT 59703  
Anaconda Sportsmen, 2 Cherry, Anaconda, MT 59711  
E.T. Bud Moran, Chairman CSKT, PO Box 278, Pablo, MT 59855  
Al Lubeck, 2710 Amherst, Ave, Butte, MT 59701  
Adam Rissien, ORV Coordinator, Wildands CPR, PO Box 7516, Missoula, MT 59807  
Josiah Pinkham, Tribal Arch., Nez Perce Tribe, PO Box 365, Lapwai, ID 83540  
Lorin Giem, 203 Silverbow Ln., Twin Bridges, MT 59754  
Bob Seidensticker, 1923 Hwy. 41 S, Twin Bridges, MT 59754  
David Gibbons, 1746 Willow Glen Rd, Anaconda, MT 59711  
John Folsom, Hairpin Ranch, 38525 Highway 278, Jackson, MT 59736-0832  
Jake Jenkins, Affiliated Accounting, Inc. 11201 S. Susan Drive Sandy, UT 84092

Ladies and Gentlemen:

The enclosed Decision Notice has been prepared for a proposal to restore native westslope cutthroat trout (WCT) in Bender, Doolittle and Andrus creeks. These streams are home to aboriginal populations of non-hybridized westslope cutthroat trout which have become greatly reduced in distribution and numbers due to brook trout competition and predation. It is likely that these

cutthroat trout populations will be extirpated in the next 10 years if conservation actions are not taken. Fish barriers which would preclude upstream fish passage would need to be constructed in the streams to isolate the native cutthroat from non-native fish downstream. WCT upstream from the barriers would be salvaged and then reintroduced after completion of the project. Once the barrier is in place and WCT salvage has been completed, non-native trout upstream of the fish barriers would be removed using the piscicide rotenone likely in the formulation of CFT Legumine (5% rotenone). This restoration project would result in expanding the range of WCT in Bender Creek from less than ½ mile of stream to over 4 miles of stream. The range of WCT in Doolittle Creek would be expanded from 1 mile of occupied habitat to over 11 miles of habitat and the range in Andrus Creek would be expanded from 3 miles to 10 miles.

The EA was released for public comment on 3/24/2017 for 31 days and advertised in the Butte Standard and Dillon Weekly newspapers.

A total of 1 written comment was received (see attached Decision Notice).

Questions regarding these Decision Notices should be mailed to:

Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks  
Re: Bender, Doolittle and Andrus Creek WCT Restoration  
Attn: Jim Olsen  
1820 Meadowlark Ln.  
Butte, MT 59701

Or e-mailed to: [jimolsen@mt.gov](mailto:jimolsen@mt.gov)

# **Environmental Assessment for Native Fish Restoration in Bender Doolittle and Andrus creeks in the Big Hole River Drainage**

## **ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT DECISION NOTICE**

**Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks  
Region Three, Bozeman  
April 25, 2017**

### **Proposed Action**

Montana Fish Wildlife and Parks (FWP) is proposing to restore native westslope cutthroat trout (WCT) in Bender, Doolittle and Andrus creeks. These streams are home to aboriginal populations of non-hybridized westslope cutthroat trout which have become greatly reduced in distribution and numbers due to brook trout competition and predation. It is likely that these cutthroat trout populations will be extirpated in the next 10 years if conservation actions are not taken. Fish barriers which would preclude upstream fish passage would need to be constructed in the streams to isolate the native cutthroat from non-native fish downstream. WCT upstream from the barriers would be salvaged and then reintroduced after completion of the project. Once the barrier is in place and WCT salvage has been completed, non-native trout upstream of the fish barriers would be removed using the piscicide rotenone likely in the formulation of CFT Legumine (5% rotenone). This restoration project would result in expanding the range of WCT in Bender Creek from less than ½ mile of stream to over 4 miles of stream. The range of WCT in Doolittle Creek would be expanded from 1 mile of occupied habitat to over 11 miles of habitat and the range in Andrus Creek would be expanded from 3 miles to 10 miles.

Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks is required by the Montana Environmental Policy Act (MEPA) to assess significant potential impacts of a proposed action to the human and physical environment. In compliance with MEPA, an Environmental Assessment (EA) was completed for the proposed project by FWP and released for public comment on March 24, 2017.

Public comments on the proposed project were taken for 31 days (through April 24, 2017). The EA notice was mailed to 36 individuals and groups; legal notice was printed in the Montana Standard (Butte) newspaper and the Dillon Tribune. A draft EA was posted on the FWP webpage: <http://fwp.mt.gov/publicnotices/>. One written comment was received via email during the comment period. This comment was included in the review and listed below.

**Comment 1.** *Is the current population of Westslope cutthroat trout (WCT) in these streams genetically pure? If so, I recommend that you salvage those WCT and use them*

*to restock the streams. Research is showing us that hatchery raised fish, even though "genetically pure", are inferior to wild fish in many ways. Using rotenone to rid these streams of all fish and then just replacing them with hatchery raised WCT is not a good idea. Don't follow the example of Soda Butte Creek in which 800 hatchery Yellowstone cutthroat trout were dumped in after the second year of rotenone treatment.*

**Response:** Bender, Doolittle and Andrus creeks have pure populations of WCT remaining in them and they will be salvaged prior to treatment then released back into the streams once brook trout are removed. No hatchery stocks will be used in any of the streams to aid in repopulation. If the native stocks for some reason do not successfully fill the habitat in the streams, additional WCT from nearby streams would be imported and released.

### **Decision**

Based on the Environmental Assessment and the public comments received, and benefits and risks associated with this project, it is my decision to go forward with the Proposed Action as outlined in the Draft Environmental Assessment. I find there to be no significant impacts on the human and physical environments associated with this project. Therefore, I conclude that the Environmental Assessment is the appropriate level of analysis, and that an Environmental Impact Statement is not required.



Sam B. Sheppard  
Region Three Supervisor

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